

US-131 Improvement Study

Project Newsletter – Stakeholders’ Meeting Notes, Questions & Comments

February 2004

In an effort to solicit public input and to keep everyone informed of key issues, this newsletter is being circulated to the US-131 Improvement Study Stakeholders’ Committee.

In this issue:

Notes from the recent stakeholders meeting including questions, answers, comments, and concerns.

Stakeholders’ Meeting, February 26, 2004.

A stakeholders’ meeting for the *US-131 Stakeholders’ Committee* was held on February 26, 2004 at the City of Three Rivers Community Center. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss *Practical Alternative 5 (PA-5)*, introduce *PA-5 (Modified)*, give an update of the current project status, and gather feedback about PA-5 from the stakeholders. Representatives from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Consoer Townsend Envirodyne Engineers (CTE), and Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) gave a presentation regarding the project.

MDOT introduced PA-5 (Modified), which provides another feasible non-freeway option to alternatives PA-1 through PA-4. The consulting team presented a conceptual overview of PA-5 (Modified) and summarized the existing PA-1 through PA-5 along with related access management efforts for the corridor. (Attached is a map showing the concept for each alternative).

MDOT explained that PA-5 (Modified) will be examined under the mandate of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) in the same manner as PA-1 through PA-5.

Schedule

Below is a brief overview of upcoming milestones.

- Complete studies and technical memoranda – End of 1st Quarter ‘04
- Submit Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to FHWA – Middle of 3rd Quarter ‘04
- Conduct public hearing – End of 3rd Quarter ‘04
- Determine recommended alternative - End of 1st Quarter ‘05
- Submit Final EIS to FHWA - Middle of 3rd Quarter ‘05
- Obtain Record of Decision – End of 3rd Quarter ‘05

A stakeholders’ feedback period was conducted. After the stakeholders’ meeting was adjourned, questions and concerns from the general public were addressed in a workshop format. Attendees were able to view several aerial exhibits of the project area depicting PA-1 through PA-5 as well PA-5 (Modified).

Questions and concerns from stakeholders are summarized below.

Stakeholder’s questions and concerns:

These comments are representative of those from the February 26, 2004 stakeholders’ meeting.

Q: Will the US-131 BR remain the same?

A: ***MDOT stated that it is the responsibility of the local agencies to decide if the existing US-131 BR remains the same, and if all agencies don’t agree, the Department would leave the US-131 BR in its existing place.***

Q: Why was PA-5 (Modified) developed?

A: ***PA-5 (Modified) was developed in response from comments from the last stakeholders meeting in November 03. It provides an alternative that leaves the***

Millers Mill and Youngs Prairie intersection located northwest of Constantine open.

Q: Did the Steering Committee consider the expected rise in cost of gas in its level of service rating.

A: ***The level of service analysis conducted does not look at the actual cost of gas. However, the analysis does evaluate the impact of emissions due to traffic congestion.***

Q: Will the public have an opportunity to comment on both PA-5 and PA-5 (Modified)?

A: ***Yes, both PA-5 and PA-5 (Modified) will be carried through the end of the NEPA process.***

Q: What is the next step in the study?

A: ***The next step is to finalize PA-5 and PA-5 (Modified). Once PA-5 & PA-5 (Modified) are finalized; social, economic and environmental (SEE) studies will begin to evaluate the impacts of each alternative in detail. Cumulative economic impacts within the US-131 corridor will also be evaluated.***

Stakeholders Feedback

1. MDOT needs to stay on the original path of keeping the alternatives near or on the existing US-131 footprint as much as possible.
2. The existing US-131 BR should remain the same.
3. The project should be extended to include the Village of Schoolcraft.
4. Traffic continuity should be maintained wherever possible.
5. A concern was expressed that PA-5 and PA-5 (Modified) would not facilitate economic development on US-131.
6. A limited access highway is needed to secure future economic development for the region.
7. The project is taking too long.
8. The alternatives should as much as possible address the original 14 points adopted by the Stakeholders Committee.
9. PA-5 and PA-5 (Modified) requires less farm land than PA-1 thru PA-4.
10. A two-lane alternative will not reduce congestion problems on US-131.

Next Meeting:

The Stakeholders Meeting scheduled for March 30th has been postponed, an invitation will be sent out by mail indicating the new meeting date.